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A Sketch and a Poem. Song of the Mad Tinker

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suitcase, and when he looked up it was to peer anxiously at the tears in her eyes.

"Dorie. What?"

"Where are the children, where are they?"

"Why, in the yard; don't worry about them."

"The baby's out . . . I'm afraid for them . . . it's dark . . ."

She sat awkwardly, trying to penetrate the darkened glass across the room. What was falling away; what hold on the weave of the present loosening and she leaving them—dispersed like the voices into the waiting evening? She felt discarded, carrying alone a resentful life. These strangers: she looked at her husband, withdrawn from her; and out the window again.

"Oh, Kennet's gone." She arose, an ungainly figure, catching at the slim and swaying post of the bed.

The hall directed her away from them. Her husband was a shadow

at her side. The house seemed to anticipate her descending steps; a hinge scratched and the rear door clapped to. They were in the foyer and the door was open to the expectant night.

"They were singing; why did they stop," she said.

They got into the cab.

The cab was drawn away across the gravel drive; its taillight lost down the demanding street. Then, quietly and mounting ritualistically, isolating the house from the understandable darkness around it, from the yard the children's voices grew again:

"Old mommie witch . . . old mommie witch . . ."

And in the hedge by the steps, a thin, monotonous little voice repeated, "da-da-dada . . . da-da-dada . . ."

And closer came the steps, "Kennet? Kennet?"

The moth tapped the lighted door.

Song of the Mad Tinker

Woodlands that slumber
In this sly season,
Ungathered lumber
Left beyond reason,
Untapped sweet maple,
Uncut soft popple,
Mellowing barnbeam,
Rotting fence staple,
Mildewing apple,
Unpainted steeple;
Hung from the crosstrees
Web of the spider:
Where is the life that
Sparkled like cider?

God! Has the lean rat
Burrowed the larder?
Have all the people
Under their warder
Passed like the summer
Into this charnel
Season, sans house?
Cursed be the dark land
By bell, book, and candle!
O, I am lonely—
Spell me the reason
Is it the season
And me wandering only?